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## **THE 2005 BUDGET What It Means For Education**

President Bush released his fiscal 2005 budget proposal to Congress and the public for consideration on Monday February 2nd. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss this budget, paying particular attention to the effect it will have on our education system.

The \$2.4 trillion budget for the fiscal year, beginning in October, will put the Government \$521 billion in debt. As a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, I believe this is unacceptable. The FY2005 budget cuts sixty-five domestic programs and leaves the nation's educational system scrambling to fund programs including No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Special Education, reading programs, vocational training, and Pell Grants for college bound students who could not otherwise finance their education. Cutting educational programs will only serve to diminish the quality of our economy's workforce in future generations.

Although the budget highlights the additional \$1 billion invested in the NCLB program for the FY2005 budget, it fails to meet the funding goals established at the time of the bill's signing into law. This year alone, the budget is \$9.4 billion less than what was promised, and, as a result, 2.4 million children will not get necessary help with math and reading. I am committed to working with Congress and the Administration in a balanced and bi-partisan way to address education as a priority for the future of our country.

The following are a few of the major budget issues that we in Congress will have to address before enacting it in 2005:

- Grants Head Start a less than three percent increase in funding, even though the program currently only serves sixty-percent of eligible preschoolers. In addition, the budget changes the core of the program by turning it into a block grant program, eliminating comprehensive educational, health and nutritional services that participating children currently receive.
- Cuts \$1 billion from funding promised to after-school programs in the NCLB Act, leaving 1.3 million children without a safe place to play and learn after school.
- Provides Special Education programs \$2.5 billion less, making public less than half that promised by NCLB.
- Allocates only \$2.9 billion to teacher quality programs that train 56,000 teachers, accounting for \$234 million less than authorized under NCLB.
- Reduces federal investment in education by \$1.4 billion by eliminating dozens of key programs, including dropout prevention, family literacy, and comprehensive school reform.
- Stops Impact Aid funding, jeopardizing programs and services for children of military families.
- Freezes the maximum Pell Grant at \$4,050 and cuts funding for Perkins Loans by \$100 million. It also restricts or eliminates funding for campus-based student aid programs such as work study, grants, and loans to about 78,000 students. Worse, this coincides with nationwide tuition increases of as much as forty-percent at state universities.

- Cuts Vocational Education by twenty-five percent (\$316 million) of that in the proposed budget.

Overall, the Presidents budget provides \$57.3 billion for the Department of Education. However, by eliminating thirty-eight educational programs and freezing many others at the 2004 level of funding, it falls short of providing a decent education for all children. I firmly believe that part the development of a highly educated workforce is necessary if we wish for the US economy to remain the strongest in the world. Although the budget does not, as it stands, promise the realization of that goal, I believe that we in Congress will be able to work together to affect important changes to funding within this budget, thereby honoring the promises that the No Child Left Behind Act made to America's Youth.